

Tells the Facts and Names the Names CounterPunch

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Oil in Its Hours of Triumph

Probed by public interest groups, the Democratic candidate for the presidential nomination agrees that he will:

- Break up the oil cartel, dominated by the Seven Sisters, whose American members are Texaco, Chevron, Mobil, Exxon, and ARCO.
- Prohibit oil and gas companies from simultaneously controlling other energy sources such as coal and natural gas.
- Nationalize the development of all oil and gas reserves on federally owned, public lands.
- Curb corporate profits from public leases, particularly oil companies drilling on the outer continental shelf.
- Oppose deregulation of the oil and gas industry.

The candidate, obviously, was not Bill Clinton. But this check list is no fantasy. We have in our possession, held by a CounterPunch editor in his files for 20 years, the statement of intent of candidate and nominee Jimmy Carter, released by the Carter Campaign in June of 1976, answering a questionnaire sent by the Energy Action Committee. Note that in 1976 Carter was among the most conservative of the candidates, yet he too felt it expedient to vow to bring the titans of American capitalism to their knees.

Now move the clock forward 20 years.

This fall the US Department of the Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency plan to spill eleven thousand gallons of crude oil off the coast of Washington state's Olympic peninsula. EPA scientists, clad in full body condoms, will monitor the flow of the oil slick as it passes over a marine mammal sanctuary containing some of the best orca whale habitat in the Pacific. Then, Coast Guard helicopters will swoop onto the scene to

drop incendiary bombs and burn off the slick, hopefully before the goop fetches up on the shores of the Makah and Quinault Indian reservations.

Billed by proud government flacks as an enviro wargame, this mad exercise actually represents unconditional surrender to the oil industry. What we have here is taxpayer money underwriting industry efforts to persuade the public (which maintains a healthy loathing for Big Oil) that drilling in the most ecologically sensitive areas is just fine, and that even the worst disaster can be swiftly cleaned up.

There is every reason for the public to be skeptical of the oil companies' good intentions. An independent counsel who investigated the Department of Interior's oil leasing practices put together a report in 1994 which was recently excavated by the DC-based Project on Government Oversight.

It emerges that ten companies extracting oil and gas from federal lands in California have underpaid the US Treasury by at least \$1.5 billion in royalties and accumulated interest dating back to 1960. The companies are: Texaco, Shell, Mobil, ARCO, Chevron, Exxon, UNOCAL, Phillips, Santa Fe and Oryx. By federal law, one quarter of this money should have been returned to the state of California's desperately underfunded school system, which has thus been shorted \$375 million by the oil companies. The remainder should have been deposited in the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a federal account used to acquire public lands for parks and wildlife reserves.

Did the US Interior Department, bastion of Babbitt the Magnificent, take action after reading this report? It did no such thing. It proposed instead a simple

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Doing Well By Doing Good

Corporate executives have long lined their pockets at the expense of workers. Now, a **CounterPunch** survey of salaries in the public interest sector shows that many advocacy groups seem to have taken a page from the handbook of corporate greed. Indeed, in some cases the gulf between the upper echelons and the toilers at such groups appears to mimic the income disparities found at Fortune 500 firms. (The figures cited below, culled from annual filings to the IRS and a variety of published sources, include benefits and are from 1993 unless otherwise stated.)

It will not surprise **CounterPunch** readers that the highest paid do-gooder executives head Beltway environmental groups. Jay Hair, who was finally forced out of the National Wildlife Federation last year, had been raking in a salary and benefits package worth \$298,876. Hair's counterpart at the Nature Conservancy, John Sawhill, pulls in \$202,118 a year

while the Environmental Defense Funds Fred Krupp takes home \$210,774.

It's interesting to compare green salaries with the pay of CEOs of energy industry trade associations. The compensation package of Michael Baly III of the American Gas Association (\$343,780) topped that of all of the wildlife defenders listed

The head of the Petroleum Marketers Association makes less than many Beltway greens.

above, but CEOs Lawrence Hobart of the American Public Power Association (\$207,029) and Phillip Chisolm of the Petroleum Marketers Association of America (\$171,528) would have done just fine financially by moving into a post at a DC green organization.

Sharing the same tax bracket are executives at conservative and liberal think tanks. Edward Crane, who oversees the deregulation boosters at the Cato Institute, makes \$160,000 (1994) while Bruce MacLaury of the Brookings Institution, a Democratic think tank, easily tops that with \$227,981. Morton Abramowitz of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace earns \$181,688 annually while the hawkish head of Georgetown's Center for Strategic and International Studies, David Abshire, nets \$232,646.

It's no surprise that the Heritage Foundation's Edwin Feulner tops the chart in this sector with a pay package of \$433,611 or that Al From, the head of the Democratic Leadership Council who has made a career (and a fortune) demanding sacrifice from the rest of the population, takes home \$225,000.

Pay at the liberal Institute for Policy Studies is fairly modest. Its highest paid staffer for 1995 was Marcus Raskin, who made \$75,000 (and benefits of \$5,780), this after more than three decades of employment. In the same Dupont Circle area building as the Institute is a relative newcomer, the Demilitarization for Democracy Project, whose director, Dr. Caleb Rossiter, makes the same salary as Raskin and \$3,500 more than Raskin in

benefits. The Project has six staffers whose combined salaries total roughly \$225,000, all but \$25,000 of the outfit's revenues.

Fighting poverty can also be a lucrative career here in Washington. David Liederman of the Child Welfare League of America makes \$138,075 crusading for the underdog; Robert Greenstein, president of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, gets \$105,000 (1996) and Edward Cooney of the Food Research and Action Center, a puny shop dedicated to eradicating hunger, makes \$84,246.

Pay at conservative and liberal civil rights groups is also interesting. Wayne LaPierre of the National Rifle Association takes home \$184,708 while Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition makes \$122,556. Nestled comfortably in between is Arthur Kropp, president of People for the American Way (1994), who makes \$147,760. Note that the revenues of the latter group stand at about \$6 million, less than half of the Christian Coalition's \$14.6 million and about five percent of the National Rifle Association's \$121.4 million. Seven other people on the People for the American Way staff make more than \$65,000 per year.

Members of the right-wing groups certainly get their money's worth for their contributions. The same can't be said of backers of People for the American Way, the supposed defender of civil rights which was too cowardly to oppose the Antiterrorism Act recently signed by President Clinton.

The bloated salaries paid to public advocates present obvious problems. "Non-profit public interest groups should not reflect the huge disparities in society and the corporate world," Bill Goodfellow, a director of the Center for International Policy, a human rights group, says. "We're supposed to be critics of the established order and if you make as much money as people in the establishment, you will be very reluctant to rock the boat." Goodfellow is one of the few public interest advocates who can make this statement in good conscience: he makes \$43,080. Goodfellow says that the directors of public interest groups have little difficulty in extracting big pay packages from their boards of directors: "Very seldom do boards resist increasing top salaries. The reason is that most board members are rich and they have a hard time asking their executives to accept modest salaries." ■

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A Death in Georgetown

The Unsolved Killing of Mary Meyer

There are some stories in Babylon that lead a fitful existence, never fully laid to rest. One such tale is slurring into life again, the saga of Mary Meyer. This woman, murdered thirty years ago, is to be the subject of a new book and has come under scrutiny in a number of recent magazine stories. Many Americans are entirely unfamiliar with the Meyer story and we thought that as we head into our annual monthly recess, we'd send our readers off with this mystery.

She was so strikingly attractive a woman that the first detective at the scene of her murder later said she "even looked beautiful with a bullet in her head". Mary Pinchot Meyer was shot and killed on October 12, 1964, two days shy of her 44th birthday, during an afternoon stroll along a footpath flanking the old Chesapeake and Ohio barge canal in Georgetown. She was an artist and socialite, a woman who, according to a front-page story on her death in *The Washington Post*, had "a hundred thousand friends."

Something the *Post* didn't report, and what wasn't known publicly until more than a decade after her murder, was that Meyer had been the mistress of President John F. Kennedy until his assassination. She was also an intimate of Jacqueline Kennedy as well as a close companion of LSD guru Timothy Leary. Her ex-husband was Cord Meyer, Jr., a CIA "dirty tricks" specialist.

Police arrested a suspect whom they charged with the murder of Mary Meyer, suggesting that she had been the victim of a bungled robbery or attempted rape. But when the man was tried the following year, a jury unanimously acquitted him. The case, closed ever since, remains officially unsolved.

For the past thirty years, some have insisted that Mary Meyer was the target of a conspiracy, murdered because she was a woman who knew too much. But no one has yet produced any evidence to back up such an assertion.

Now John H. Davis, Jacqueline Kennedy's first cousin, is working on a new book — tentatively titled *A Tale of Two Murdered Lovers: Mary Pinchot Meyer and John F. Kennedy* — that he hopes will solve the case. In addition to examining Meyer's death, Davis also promises explosive material about her romance with the President, which Davis says was serious enough to threaten JFK's marriage to

Jackie. "It's an extraordinary story and one the American people are totally ignorant of," Davis says. "When I tell people that every time Jackie left the White House, Mary Meyer walked in, they're shocked."

An automobile mechanic named Henry Wiggins heard a woman scream for help. There was a gunshot and, moments later, a second one.

Mary Pinchot hailed from one of America's wealthiest and most prominent families. Her father, Amos Pinchot, was a lawyer and close friend of President Teddy Roosevelt and her uncle, Gifford Pinchot, a two-term governor of Pennsylvania was the founder of the US Forest Service.

Mary went to Vassar, where she first met John Kennedy, then at Harvard. After graduation from college and a brief career as a journalist, she married Cord Meyer in 1945. Her husband's family had grown rich in the sugar business and Cord's father, well connected in Democratic Party circles, served as a diplomat in Cuba, Italy and Sweden.

Cord served in the military during World War II — he lost an eye during the American attack against Japanese forces on Guam — and in 1951 signed up with the CIA. He worked closely with the Agency-backed Congress for Cultural Freedom in Europe, which funneled money to Cold War intellectuals, and later coordinated the infiltration of the US National Student Association.

Mary and Cord had three sons, Quentin, Mark and Michael. In December of 1956 nine-year-old Michael was

struck by a car and killed as he ran across the street in front of the family home. The Meyers' marriage, troubled for several years, dissolved in 1957.

After the divorce, Mary moved from McLean, Virginia, where she was neighbors with Robert and Ethel Kennedy, to a townhouse on "N" Street in Georgetown. Among Mary's neighbors were her sister, Toni, who was married to Ben Bradlee, then Washington editor at *Newsweek*. John and Jackie lived just down the block.

Mary took a number of lovers, including the abstract painter Kenneth Noland. She was a painter herself, good enough to have several shows in Washington, including one at the Corcoran gallery.

Meyer's romantic involvement with JFK was first revealed in 1976 by James Truitt, a one-time vice president of *The Washington Post* who along with his wife, Anne, was a close friend of Mary's. According to Truitt's story, which appeared in the *National Inquirer* and has never been disputed, JFK first propositioned Mary at a White House party in early 1961, when he urged her to stay behind after the other guests departed. Then still involved with Kenneth Noland, Mary refused. A month later, JFK called her at home and urged Meyer to meet him at the White House. Having won her consent, Kennedy dispatched a limousine driven by a Secret Service agent to bring her to the White House. Thus began their love affair, which included some 40 visits to the White House when Jackie was traveling or at the Kennedy country estate in Middleburg, Virginia.

This was Camelot and the city swirled with black-tie gatherings, embassy par-

He-e-e-re's Babylon

Washington Babylon, our new book intimately detailing the corruption of the political establishment, has just hit the book stores. In bipartisan fashion, we savage Republicans and Democrats alike. We are offering Washington Babylon to CounterPunch subscribers for \$16.40 (includes postage), a discount of 20 percent.

ties, Georgetown dinners. Mary sometimes attended the same affairs as JFK, though Jackie accompanied the President and Mary generally came with the Bradlees. She was there for a Potomac cruise on May 29, 1963 with, among others, Robert and Ethel Kennedy, David Niven and his wife Hjordis, Senator George Smathers and his wife Rosemary, and socialite Fifi Fell.

Jackie arranged the cruise to commemorate JFK's birthday, his last as it turned out. With both his wife — five months pregnant at the time — and his mistress aboard, the President snuck below deck with Niven's wife. "He came back about ten minutes later," Senator Smathers, who JFK had appointed to distract Jackie during his absence, later told the writer Kitty Kelley. "It was like a rooster getting on top of a chicken real fast and then the poor little hen ruffled her feathers and wonders what the hell happened to her."

Despite such shortcomings, Mary was clearly enchanted with JFK and at times found it difficult to conceal her feelings. At a dinner party hosted by Carey Fischer, Mary went on at such length about the difficulties of the President's life in the White House, including the problem of getting decent diaper service, that one guest finally cut her off by complaining that the minutiae of JFK's domestic affairs were of no interest to anyone.

During this same period Mary struck up a friendship with Timothy Leary. Leary, who recently died of prostate cancer, has claimed that Meyer told him the government was studying ways to use drugs for espionage and asked him for instructions on how to use LSD for brainwashing sessions. According to James Truitt, Mary and JFK experimented with drugs on at least one occasion. In July of 1962, they smoked marijuana on his White House bed. After the third joint JFK begged off, saying "No more. Suppose the Russians did something now." He also promised to get Mary cocaine, a pledge apparently never honored, and joked about getting stoned at the White House, which was soon to host a major conference on narcotics.

Mary Meyer's last walk was meant to be a brief one. It was about noon when she closed the door to her Georgetown studio, having first turned on an electric fan to dry

a painting. She walked a few blocks, crossed the foot bridge that leads to the canal and stepped onto the towpath, which runs along a wooded slope that drops away to the Potomac river.

Not long after Meyer entered the towpath, an automobile mechanic named Henry Wiggins was working on a car that had stalled on a bridge overlooking the canal. He heard a woman scream for help. There was a gunshot and, a few moments later, a second one. Wiggins ran to the other side of the bridge, looked down, and saw a man placing an object into the pocket of a light windbreaker, then dash for the woods. On the pathway lay a woman.

Though both Jackie and his mistress were aboard, JFK managed to sneak below deck for ten minutes with David Niven's wife.

Wiggins ran to a nearby gas station and called police, who quickly sealed off the canal area. About twenty minutes later an officer took into custody Raymond Crump, Jr., who had been found walking along the abandoned railroad tracks. He was dripping wet, explaining that he had been fishing and fallen into the water when he dozed off. Crump said his fishing pole, which was nowhere to be found, must have gone in with him.

The victim carried no identification. The only clue was a glove found near her body with the name Meyer faintly visible on the inside. After checking all the Meyers in the phone book and getting no answer at her Georgetown home, police contacted Ben Bradlee, whose name neighbors had given them. Eight hours after her death, Bradlee identified Mary Meyer's body at the morgue.

In July of 1965, Raymond Crump went on trial, represented by Dovey Roundtree, who in addition to being a very skillful lawyer is an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Roundtree — now 82, legally blind but still practicing law — never believed that Crump killed Mary Meyer. Whoever did — and Roundtree thought initially that it was a scorned lover — had set out to do so. "It could have been an

accidental meeting [between the killer and Meyer] but I don't think so," Roundtree told **CounterPunch** during a talk at her law offices in a poor area of Washington. "It was broad daylight and there was a lot of foot traffic along the canal. You'd have to be a fool to kill someone there unless that was what you were there for in the first place."

The police may have blocked off the five official exits from the canal area, but there were plenty of unmarked paths by which the murderer could have escaped, Roundtree remembered. And why did the police, who searched the woods and river for days, never find the murder weapon? Because, she says, the killer took it with him.

Decisive at Crump's trial was Roundtree's discrediting of the testimony of Henry Wiggins and of another witness, Air Force Lieutenant William Mitchell. The latter had been jogging on the towpath shortly before the murder and passed Mary Meyer and, trailing behind her, a man he later identified as Crump. Both men described Meyer's killer as about 5'8 and Mitchell estimated his weight at 185 pounds. But Crump was just 5'5 and weighed 145 pounds, "a shrimp of a man", Roundtree says.

For her final argument — "the best I ever gave and I have given a few that have moved mountains" — Roundtree told the jury: "[Raymond Crump] is your Exhibit A. You can remember everything, these mountains of evidence presented by [the prosecutor] Mr. Alfred Hantman ... Well, then you must make him grow and you must fill him out in dimensions which simply do not exist. I say to you that this and this alone is sufficient for you to find ... that Mr. Hantman and these hills of evidence did not prove that the person who killed this poor lady was Raymond Crump, Jr."

After five hours of deliberation, the jurors sent a note to the judge that they were deadlocked, 8 to 4, though no indication was given as to which way they were leaning. The judge ordered the panel to continue its deliberations and the following morning Raymond Crump was acquitted. That same evening he got on a bus and left Washington forever, heading South where the Crump family had relatives.

Roundtree didn't know that Mary Meyer had been JFK's mistress until the story broke in 1976. But a curious thing happened during Crump's trial. One

night she received an anonymous call from a man who told her that Mary Meyer had kept a diary and that it contained information that would be helpful to the defense. Then the caller hung up.

The next morning, Roundtree marched into court and told the judge that she had learned of a diary kept by Meyer and demanded to see it. Both the judge and prosecutor Hantman denied any knowledge of such a journal. "I was stuck because I didn't have any proof that there truly was a diary," Roundtree says.

But there was indeed a diary, one that Mary Meyer kept until her death and which is said to have recorded all of her visits to the White House. In his 1995 memoirs, *A Good Life*, Ben Bradlee says that Anne Truitt called him from Tokyo on the day of Meyer's murder. Truitt told him that Meyer had asked her to secure the diary in the event of her death. Bradlee and his wife went to Mary's home to look for the diary only to find the notorious molehunter James Angleton, having picked the lock, already inside. Angleton and his wife, Cicely, were intimates of Mary Meyer and of the Bradlees. Mary's diary was not in plain sight and the CIA man, equipped with white gloves and a drill, led the search. They looked in the furnace, out in the garden; they tapped on walls looking for a secret hiding place, all to no avail.

Ben and Toni Bradlee later went to Meyer's studio, where they found the diary in a lockbox. They turned the journal over to Angleton, who said he would destroy it at CIA headquarters. Years later, Toni asked Angleton about the diary and he admitted he still had it. He then returned the journal to Toni, who destroyed it.

Bradlee's account has been disputed by Cicely Angleton and Anne Truitt, who claim that James Angleton never broke into Meyer's home and that Mary had specifically requested that the CIA man safeguard her diary. They agree that Toni turned the journal over to Angleton and that she burned it (in the presence of Anne Truitt) after Angleton returned the diary.

Whatever the true story, persistent rumors that Meyer's diary is secretly hidden away at CIA headquarters seem unfounded. And it's impossible to know what information Dovey Roundtree's mysterious caller was referring to because the few people who have read the diary — in-

cluding Ben Bradlee — have revealed virtually nothing about what was in it.

For more than five years Leo Damore investigated Mary Meyer's murder. By early 1995 Damore — author of the bestseller, *Senatorial Privilege: The Chappaquiddick Cover-Up*, which demolished Ted Kennedy's alibi regarding the accident that killed Mary Jo Kopechne — told friends that he was nearing a breakthrough. Then, in October of 1995, Damore, despondent over his divorce, shot himself at home in front of a visiting health worker.

Damore's lawyer, James Smith, is a long-time friend of John Davis. At Smith's suggestion, Damore's son turned over his father's research to Davis, a leading chronicler of Camelot. He recently completed *Jacqueline Bouvier: An Intimate Memoir* and has previously written *Mafia Kingfish: Carlos Marcello and the Assassination of John F. Kennedy*, which alleges that Marcello had JFK eliminated because of his administration's battles with organized crime.

JFK, of course, had many lovers. In addition to well known partners like Marilyn Monroe and Judith Campbell Exner, who simultaneously was involved with the mobster Sam Giancana, there were "Fiddle" and "Faddie", the code name given by the Secret Service to two young White House staffers; Pamela Turnure, Jackie's 23-year-old secretary; and a string of call girls who ministered to him in his suite at the Carlyle Hotel.

None of this seems to have greatly disturbed the First Lady. But Davis says Jackie knew of her husband's affair with Mary Meyer and was furious about it. "Jackie and Mary Meyer were friends, and she knew how intelligent and charming Mary was," he says. "She was more on his wavelength than Jackie. She was a painter, an extremely able conversationalist and very sexy." Davis has interviewed people who witnessed altercations between JFK and Jackie when the First Lady spotted Mary at official functions. He says Jackie sought to strike Meyer from invitation lists whenever possible.

JFK was known to be appalled by the First Lady's wild extravagances, especially shopping sprees during which she'd run up bills of tens of thousands of dollars on clothing alone. "Jack liked the fact that Mary had her own money and that she wouldn't be a golddigger," says Davis,

who believes that JFK was contemplating leaving Jackie for Mary after he left office.

Davis feels sure that Raymond Crump did not murder Meyer. The autopsy, he says, clearly indicates that the murder was the work of a professional: "There was one shot to the brain and one to the aorta. These weren't random shots. They hit the most vital organs of the human body and induced her immediate death."

So who killed Mary Meyer? Davis is exploring two theories. Through her contacts in the CIA, Mary knew of the Agency's efforts to kill Cuban leader Fidel Castro. She was known to be voluble, she smoked marijuana and she used LSD. "The plots against Castro were the CIA's deepest secret at the time and someone may have worried that she would reveal her knowledge," Davis says. "I wouldn't put anything past the CIA during that period. It was one of the most evil organizations on the face of the earth."

His second theory is that someone close to Robert Kennedy — running for the Senate in the state of New York when Meyer was killed — may have ordered a hit. "It's conceivable that someone in his political machine or one of his handlers was mortally afraid of what would happen to Bobby's image if it came out that Mary Meyer was the lover of the martyred president," Davis says. It's even conceivable, Davis adds portentously, that the man who put a contract on Meyer's head was family patriarch Joseph Kennedy.

Americans love a good conspiracy yarn, especially one that involves JFK. But was there indeed a plot to kill Mary Meyer?

The man who has probed most deeply into her murder is the New York writer Ron Rosenbaum. Two decades ago he and a colleague, Philip Nobile, set out looking to find evidence of a conspiracy. But their account, published in the now defunct *New Times* magazine in 1976, found no such proof. "All the evidence in the case suggests that it was a random act of violence," Rosenbaum says today. "There is no evidence, zero, to indicate a conspiracy." So Crump was definitely the killer? "If he wasn't, it was likely someone who looked like him and who managed to escape."

Of course, this will hardly be convincing to the conspiracy crowd. Nor will be the protests of Mary Meyer's friends and acquaintances, who unanimously and an-

grily insist that her killer got off back in 1965. Cord Meyer, Mary's former husband, says Raymond Crump "was guilty as hell". He calls the conspiracy theory "the craziest idea I ever heard" — an opinion which can only heighten the suspicions of the conspiracy buffs. After all, they see the CIA as a chief suspect in Kennedy's murder.

But though skeptics abound, all the signs indicate that Mary Meyer was the victim of nothing more than a common crime. If the CIA had wanted to eliminate Meyer, it would have been far simpler to quietly kill her at her studio rather than risk a hit in broad daylight. And if the mastermind of the plot was someone from Robert Kennedy's camp, that person must have calculated, bizarrely, that exposure of JFK's affair with Meyer would have been more embarrassing to Bobby than the potential exposure of Bobby's own involvement, even if indirect, in Meyer's murder. Joseph Kennedy, the man Davis says may have ordered the hit on Meyer, was incapacitated by a stroke at the time of her death, capable of little more than nodding his head yes or no in response to questions (according to Rose Kennedy, he often was so confused that he nodded yes when he meant no).

The circumstances surrounding Meyer's murder are more consistent with an attempted assault than with a professional hit. John Davis suggests that the killer crept up from behind and swiftly executed her, but in fact Meyer fought for her life. Her jacket and trousers were torn, her left knee was scraped and, as Wiggins' testimony indicates, she had time to cry out for help.

Police found Meyer's blood on a tree, which she apparently had latched onto in a desperate attempt to keep from being dragged into the woods. In his closing arguments, Prosecutor Hantman said that Mary Meyer held on to the tree "for her life. She didn't want to lose sight of the people; and he was attempting to pull her down behind the canal. He shot her once and she resisted. She broke away from him. She ran across the towpath. She fell. She was alive and he had to shoot her again so she couldn't identify him."

The circumstantial evidence against Raymond Crump was compelling. He'd claimed to have gone to the canal to go fishing but a neighbor saw Crump leave

his house on the day of the murder without his only fishing pole, which police later found at his home.

When he was being interrogated at the police station by Detective Bernard Crooke — the man so struck by Meyer's beauty at the death scene — Crump broke down when an officer returned from a search of the canal area with a light-colored windbreaker similar to the one described by witness Wiggins. It had been fished from the river and contained a pack of Pall Malls, Crump's brand of cigarettes. Crooke, who died a few years ago, told Rosenbaum that upon seeing the jacket, Crump exclaimed, "It looks like you got a stacked deck" and then began to cry.

And while Wiggins was off in his physical description of Crump, he was far enough away from the suspect that the discrepancy seems plausible. At the close

Crump claimed that he went to the canal to go fishing, but when police searched his home they found his only fishing pole in a closet.

of the trial, Hantman dramatically produced the shoes Crump was wearing when he was arrested. They had a two-inch heel, which accounts for much of the difference between Wiggins's estimate and Crump's actual height.

Even if it seems a simple matter, however, that's never going to hold anyone back. Davis's forthcoming book will be snatched up by all conspiracy lovers, by Camelot watchers and by those who simply enjoy a good mystery from Babylon. For like the famous Zapruder film, the Mary Meyer case is replayed over and over again by people searching for clues that in all likelihood don't exist. About a year ago, placards mysteriously appeared along the canal towpath with her photograph and the words "Remember Mary Meyer." ■

Jason Vest's name was inadvertently omitted from the masthead of the last issue. He contributed the story on DNA databases.

Dees Watch

The latest mailshot generated by Morris Dees Southern Poverty Law Center is the "Security Fund Appeal", an annual communication which portrays in lurid terms the immense personal perils faced by the intrepid Dees and his staff as they go about their daily business (which, as **CounterPunch** readers know, consists almost entirely of coaxing dollars out of liberal pockets).

After reporting that the Center is "in the process of spending \$1.5 million in sophisticated security equipment and highly-trained personnel", Dees concludes with a postscript to the effect that "We will be signing a contract to purchase a portion of our new ... security package before August 1st. Our security consulting firm is urging us to move ahead quickly with this work. Please rush your special gift as soon as possible."

Those visualizing a hard-hearted security consulting firm demanding cash on the barrel before foiling the advancing Militia-men can relax. Though unmentioned in his fundraising letter, Dees has \$68 million in the bank. The \$1.5 million expenditure for the security equipment is about the same as Dees spends annually for legal work, though the Center pulls in many times more than that with its hysterical direct mail campaigns.

Another of Dees' current money-making schemes involves the church burnings across the south. Back in January, Dees told *The New York Times* that the burnings were no organized effort. "This is deer hunting season and you have a lot of hunting clubs up there, and a lot of drunk white boys who might be angry at not getting a deer," he told the newspaper. "It's still bigoted, insensitive and intimidating, but it's not organized."

That was before Dees realized that he could make big bucks off the issue. After learning that the Center for Constitutional Rights was planning to file a civil rights lawsuit against hate groups believed to be involved in some of the church burnings, Dees suddenly decided a massive conspiracy was afoot. He swiftly filed a pre-emptive lawsuit of his own (in much the same way that he stole the chain gang issue from the American Civil Liberties Union) and is now extracting money from donors by inflating the Center's role in this campaign. ■

(Oil, continued from p. 1)

write-off of the non-payment as an accounting loss, with a reform of the regulations to ensure that no oil company will again face the embarrassment of being called derelict in its payment practices.

Big Oil engineered this colossal theft from the California school system and the conservation fund in the following fashion. In 1960, the oil companies submitted a joint bid for the outer continental shelf reserves on the southern California coast. Because the companies colluded on their bid, the price paid for these lucrative deposits was a fraction of their real value. Wells sprang up and the companies — acting as a cartel — prevented any independents from getting into the action.

These big oil companies are all “vertically integrated” producers and the cartel has a stranglehold on pricing. For example, the cartel can artificially depress the price of crude oil at the wellhead in order to drive independents out of the action and to reduce its own royalty payments to the federal government. Such royalty payments are based on the price of crude. But the cartel can easily recoup its losses by simply running up the price of oil and gas at the refinery or at the pump.

By law, the federal government is supposed to assess royalties off the market value of crude oil. In practice, however, federal royalties have been assessed on the so-called “posted price” that the integrated companies charge themselves for their own crude oil. Thus the companies are in the pleasant position of setting the price by which the royalties are calculated. The cartel has exploited this loophole with relish. Crude oil prices between 1960 and 1993 posted by the producers for oil they extracted from the outer continental shelf in California have been 20 percent lower than crude oil prices from the rest of the country. At the same time, however, refined oil products sold in California at a rate that was marginally higher than the national one.

The US Department of the Interior is fully aware of this 33-year scam, having been many times apprised of the fix by its own investigators. On the most recent occasion, Bob Berman of the Interior Department’s Office of Policy Analysis reported on Big Oil’s frugal payments and urged that the Interior Department calculate “the exact amount of addi-

tional royalties due, including interest and criminal penalties, if any, and initiate collection procedures”.

Berman probably expected his recommendations to be acted upon, given the fact that the head of his Interior Department was no industry hack, but an import from the green movement in the form of Brooks Yeagar, whose previous perch in Washington had been at the National Audubon Society.

After remitting this memo, the naive Berman dabbled in hope for thirteen months. The actionless period was so

The oil companies engineered a colossal theft from the California school system and state conservation fund, a scheme now endorsed by Bruce Babbitt.

prolonged that even the Department of Commerce grew nervous and dispatched a memo to Babbitt, saying, “It seems that all we have seen to this point clearly establishes that there is a problem. The companies themselves testified that posted values did not represent actual values. (The Department of Interior’s) Mineral Management Service needs to do something now to avoid creating the impression that these events have not occurred.”

Brooks and Babbitt quickly decided that the best way to ensure that the events had indeed “not occurred” was to make an administrative ruling that there was “no clear evidence” that the oil companies had underpaid their royalties. They also declared that there was “no convincing evidence” that the California oil market was non-competitive.

Then Babbitt and Co. drafted an executive order for President Clinton’s signature that would exempt the oil companies from ever being audited for underpayments that occurred prior to 1990. The executive order rationalizes this extraordinary billion dollar gift to the oil companies by stating, “this will provide greater certainty to the minerals industry who are developing federal re-

sources. They can now be assured that they can expect timely closure of audits.” To top it off, Babbitt wants the future valuation of crude oil prices to be left for the oil companies to set.

Babbitt’s desire to have the oil companies police themselves came only a few weeks before the cartel managed to hike pump prices across the United States and about the same time that federal Judge H. Russell Holland of the US District Court in Anchorage accused Exxon of being part of “an elaborate ruse” to manipulate a federal jury and avoid paying \$5 billion in punitive damages resulting from the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound in 1989. “Public policy,” Holland wrote in his savage decision, “will not allow Exxon to use a secret deal to undercut the jury system, the court’s numerous orders upholding the punitive verdict, and society’s goal in punishing Exxon’s recklessness.” When is the last time you heard a politician attack the oil cartel with such anger and disgust?

Back in 1976, candidate Jimmy Carter pledged to divorce oil companies from their holdings in other energy sources. This was termed “horizontal divestiture”. In the early 1970s, the US senate had a vote in which a bill mandating such vertical divestiture failed by only three

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votes. Today, integration is not regarded as the tool of oligopoly but as an emblem of efficiency, much touted by a coalition stretching from the Heritage Foundation to the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Pew Charitable Trusts to the White House.

In Minnesota, a prime issue for citizens is the cost of keeping warm in the bitter winters. But as the utilities become

**In the name of efficiency,
100,000 poor families
could go without heat this
winter in Minneapolis.**

deregulated, they have hastened to shuffle off any commitment to keep poor people warm if they can't pay the rising costs of their bills. The argument addresses efficiency: help the poor and others wrongly pay more. Also of social obligation: why should a utility have any responsibility to the community it serves beyond the cash nexus. While the utilities enunciate this barbaric commercial philosophy, the federal government, headed by Bill Clinton, echoes the stance by cutting back savagely on heating assistance programs for the poor. This winter Minneapolis, according to Pam Marshall at Energy/CENTS, may see as many as 100,000 poor families go without heat as the temperature drops to 50 below.

Near the end of July one of the largest utilities in the Pacific Northwest, Portland General Electric, was bought by Enron, the huge natural gas concern headquartered in Texas. Having run utilities in Indonesia, China and Guatemala, Enron felt ready for investment in the US market. This purchase of a public utility by an oil and gas giant with an appalling international reputation aroused almost no public comment, not even from Peter DeFazio, Oregon's vocal progressive Democrat.

As noted, the US Senate narrowly failed to approve breakup of the oil companies in the early 1970s. Jim Aboureszk of South Dakota, a US senator at the time and chief sponsor of the bill, recently told us that Texaco immediately threw big money into a public relations campaign, one which continues to this day. Yet no politician, no mainstream newspaper, raises a murmur about the oil companies' rampages. Does anything more trenchantly disclose the political temper of our times? ■

The GOP's *Pravda*

One of the sillier myths taught in Journalism 101 is that reporters are objective professionals, seeking merely to provide unbiased information while allowing the public to reach its own conclusions. Of course, journalists have plenty of biases, amply reflected in their work.

So we at CounterPunch salute *The Washington Times* for candidly admitting that its pages are at the service of the Republican Party. On July 8, Richard Nordin, the *Times*'s "National Advocacy Manager", sent a letter to potential advertisers urging them to buy space in the newspaper's upcoming advertising supplement, to be published in conjunction with the GOP's convention in San Diego. Accompanying Nordin's letter was a note from Haley Barbour, chairman of the Republican National Committee, urging recipients to "take advantage of this opportunity to share in the excitement of our Convention through your participation and inclusion in this special supplement".

"With Republican majorities in the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate and the White House once again within our grasp, the eyes of the nation will be focused on the GOP's agenda and our Convention," Barbour wrote, perhaps overstating the nation's interest in his party's upcoming bash in San Diego. "An informed public is the Republican Party's greatest ally." ■

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